



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**DMHMRSAS LAUNCHES EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR MULTICULTURAL INDIVIDUALS**  
*Educational conference will kick off efforts on Wednesday, October 24 in Newport News*

**RICHMOND** – In recognition of a growing need to improve access for multicultural individuals with intellectual and behavioral disabilities across the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) will launch efforts next week to transform its multicultural services. Efforts will kick off at a statewide conference on October 24-25 in Newport News.

“Because of the way culture affects our interactions and perceptions, more and more emphasis is being placed on effective treatments for intellectual and behavioral disabilities in people from diverse multicultural backgrounds,” said Dr. James Reinhard, DMHMRSAS commissioner. “It is essential to build the capacity for accessible, high-quality and effective services for multicultural individuals in Virginia, and to train the caregivers who will deliver them.”

Next week’s conference, titled, “Workforce and Cultural Competency: Envision the Possibilities,” will allow DMHMRSAS to begin integrating cultural competency models into ongoing service delivery. Approximately 400 administrators, clinicians, and caregivers will learn about improving services and access for Virginia’s diverse population, more effectively managing a diverse workforce and promoting a multicultural work place.

An overview of the conference agenda is as follows:

- *Wednesday, October 24, 8:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m. – Opening remarks by Commissioner Reinhard and keynote from Dr. King Davis, former DMHMRSAS commissioner, on a market-based approach to cultural competence*
- *Thursday, October 25, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. – Keynote from Rachel Guerrero on developing and sustaining a culturally and linguistically competent organization*

Also, sessions will examine current systems and provide educational support about cultural competence, research implications, evidence-based practices and impact on access, recovery and self determination. The topics include the economic sense of cultural competency, workforce development for Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander mental health services, managing a diverse workforce, embracing an immigrant workforce and the diversity of our systems today.

The conference will be located at the Marriott Newport News at City Center, 740 Town Center Drive, Newport News, VA, 23606. More information can be found at <http://www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/OHRDM-WDI.htm>.

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*Virginia’s public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of 40 community services boards (CSBs) and 16 state facilities. DMHMRSAS seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery, and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships, and all aspects of community life for individuals with intellectual or behavioral disorders.*